United Nations A/ES-10/582–S/2013/109

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
25 February 2013

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 22 February 2013 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I once again draw the international community's attention to the critical situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees that are being held captive in Israeli jails, stressing in particular our grave concerns about the situation of prisoners who have been on long-term hunger strikes. Their plight, in addition to the other relentless violations being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, is destabilizing the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

We must again convey our alarm about the plight of four Palestinian men who have been on long-term hunger strikes — Samer Issawi, Ayman Sharawna, Tareq Qedan and Jaafar Ezzedine — each of whom is being held by Israel under administrative detention for prolonged periods without charge. The non-violent, peaceful protests by these men continue to be treated with callousness by Israel, the occupying Power, endangering their lives. Just yesterday, an Israeli court declared that Issawi's sentence would conclude on 6 March, yet he must still face a military committee that could arbitrarily imprison him for many more years.

While Issawi remains in a prison clinic, Sharawna, Qedan and Ezzedine have been transferred to hospitals due to their declining health, but none have been charged or released. This crisis has engendered numerous protests by Palestinian civilians, as well as the undertaking of a hunger strike on 19 February by hundreds of other Palestinian prisoners in solidarity, raising tensions and instability. As stated, inter alia, in a message last week from Mr. Issawi to the Ministry of Prisoners' Affairs, "The battle waged by me and by my heroic colleagues … is everyone's battle, the battle of the Palestinian people against the occupation and its prisons …"

Today, demonstrations in support of the prisoners took place across Palestine, including in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Al-Khalil, particularly at the Al-Arroub and Al-Fawwar refugee camps, with dozens of Palestinians injured by the typical brutality of the Israeli occupying forces using tear gas and rubber bullets.

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These protests were preceded by demonstrations on 15 February by hundreds of Palestinians outside the "Ofer" prison near Ramallah, who were subjected to excessive Israeli force, with at least 156 people needing medical treatment for tear gas inhalation; other similar protests near Jenin on the same day; again at "Ofer" on 20 February; and yesterday, 21 February, where hundreds of Palestinians protested near Ramallah with at least 29 people being injured by rubber bullets fired by the occupying forces.

We thus reiterate our appeal for intervention by all concerned members of the international community to save the lives of these men and to compel Israel to end its arbitrary detention and imprisonment of Palestinian civilians, to end its abuse of all those held in its captivity and to release them. Here, we express appreciation for the statement you issued on 19 February about the crisis of the hunger-striking prisoners and their deteriorating health conditions. We underscore the call for a solution without delay in order to resolve their plight and for these prisoners "to be charged and face trial with judicial guarantees in accordance with international standards, or be promptly released" and for respect for the 14 May 2012 agreement in this regard.

Today, I must also draw attention to Israel's destructive settlement practices, which continue to provoke the sensitivities and national sentiments of the Palestinian people. Demolition and eviction orders continue to be issued by Israel in its fervent drive to clear large swaths of Palestinian land of its indigenous inhabitants. On 13 February, another 20 Bedouin families were issued eviction orders, as Israel attempts to seize more Palestinian land in the Jaba' area north-east of Jerusalem to the illegal settlement of "Adam". On 21 February, four Palestinian families in Beit Dajan near Nablus were also issued demolition orders. Also, the Israeli occupying forces destroyed, on 20 February, an electricity grid in the village of Qusra near Nablus, cutting off power in the area and injuring several of the Palestinian residents who protested this senseless destruction. Yesterday, occupying forces also entered the southern Gaza Strip and razed farmland east of Khan Younis.

At the same time, the lawlessness of Israeli settlers continues, terrorizing the Palestinian people and making their daily existence in their own homeland miserable. Some of the many recent incidents include the 13 February razing of Palestinian agricultural land owned by two families in an area east of Bethlehem by Israeli settlers under the protection of Israeli soldiers; an attack by Israeli settlers on a 26-year-old Palestinian who was shepherding his flock of sheep in Al-Khalil on 20 February; and an attack on 21 February by armed settlers on the village of Qusra, where they burned six cars and Israeli soldiers then entered the village and used excessive force against the residents.

The overall situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, is rapidly deteriorating as a result of such brutality and gross violations by Israel, the occupying Power, of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. This critical situation warrants the international community's attention and action, including by the Security Council, to preserve calm, to bring an end to these illegal and destructive practices by the Government of Israel and its settlers against the Palestinian people and to preserve the small opportunity remaining for realizing peace and stability in accordance with the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 454 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 12 February 2013 (A/ES-10/581-S/2013/89) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations